As the solo librarian at Clemson University’s Gunnin Architecture Library, I have the luxury of programming the most high-profile lighted display case in an active, multi-disciplinary academic building. Over the past two years, I have transformed this opportunity into a ‘bully pulpit,’ serving up the big, wide world beyond South Carolina to a mostly homegrown student body. Instead of curriculum-based exhibits, I engage faculty, colleagues, students, and friends in collaborating to stage extra-curricular ‘provocations’: interdisciplinary displays that showcase library materials to explore social and political issues and global cultures.

Art for Political Action and Social Justice:
“When you believe that Art can change the World…”

Objectives:
1. Engage the entire art faculty in developing a new collection focus area: activist art.
2. Spark an awareness in students and passers-by that artists have the power to disrupt, challenge, stimulate, and precipitate change; i.e., that art is political.
3. Inspire art and design students to address the world with their work.
4. Test the strengths and weaknesses of the Gunnin Library’s collections re: rising contemporary and global artists. Flip a creating wave of political anxiety into a collection development opportunity.

Concept: Emphasis on significant works (from a variety of contexts) standing up to significant historical moments, rather than on individual ‘important’ artists. High visual impact—juxtapose lesser-known works and iconic stuff, without Hierarchies—focus on intent to subvert, to court personal risk for a principle, to make art that reveals, depletes, proceeds.

Gritty Cities: Urban landscapes, urban lives

Objectives:
1. Encourage students to explore world available to them on film. Foster curiosity.
2. Expose urban planning and design students to real-world environments and living conditions, through a medium outside of studio.
3. Test the extent and limits of Clemson Libraries’ film collection, given the launch of a new Global Cinema undergraduate degree program in another University college (in other words, a collection development initiative).
4. Engage international faculty and students, especially, in talking about (and suggesting) movies!

Concept: Mounting DVDs in their cases to shape a recognizable world map of films in which The City itself is either the main character or a ‘critical actor’ in the film’s narrative, enabling or constraining lives, outcomes, and the cinematic experience. Hard-to-populate areas of the map will reveal weaknesses in our collection, to be filled by acquisitions.

“Can you see me now?”
Witness to a World of Displaced Peoples

Objectives:
1. Introduce an awareness of human beings facing extreme situations across the globe into the fitting attention spans of students at university.
2. Showcase the purpose and unflinching compassion photographers and filmmakers bring to the high human calling of documenting individuals/families/peoples living through unbearable times and circumstances.
3. Inspire students to become involved world citizens.

Concept: Large format documentary photography covering a wide spectrum of displacements—both causes and affected groups—growing a dense array of films (predominantly theatrical release) from many cultures, telling the stories of people alienated from their homes by irresistible forces. Included: many races, nationalities, geographies, events, modern historical periods, and a range of stressors (political strife, crime & corruption, war, racism, social exclusion, economic exploitation, catastrophe, poverty, greed, resource collapse).

Threads in Common: Celebrating textile cultures

Objectives:
1. Expose design students to design references and forms of expression and material culture beyond their experience.
2. Demonstrate that the irresistible urge to express and celebrate identity through color, fiber, pattern, technique, materials, and design reveals how profoundly shared human purpose and creative genius trump any/all differences.
3. Communicate my passion for textiles!

Concept: An extravagant display of books + textiles from a private collection demonstrate the rich fabric arts of Africa, the Middle East, Central and South Asia, Southeast Asia, and China. Textiles from Uzbekistan, Iran, Cambodia, Laos, Indonesia (Borneo, Java, Sumatra), and several Chinese provinces.

#showmeyourprocess

Objectives:
1. Demonstrate to prospective students (and their parents) that THEY CAN DO THIS! The design process is layered and messy, with room for all levels of drawing ability. Skill comes with work.
2. Highlight Clemson’s fluid campus studio & ‘Maymester’ concepts: travel, real design and collaboration with school children and staff in sequence, from beginning to end of studio.
3. Feature a visiting lecturer’s studio instruction, to boost his prospects within the department.

Concept: Display accordion-page sketches to maximum vertical and horizontal effect. All random sketches generated by studio participants are fair game. Convey the on-site experience and collaboration with school children and staff in sequence, from beginning to end of studio.

REFERENCES

• The Emery A. Gunnin Architecture Library at Clemson University is located in the heart of Lee Hall and serves all Lee Hall-based programs: Architecture, Art, Landscape Art, City & Regional Planning, Construction Science & Management, Historic Preservation, Healthcare Architecture, Real Estate Development, and Resilient Urban Design
• Clemson University is home to the only Architecture and Landscape Architecture programs in South Carolina. The Gunnin is the sole library in the state dedicated to supporting art and building & environmental design programs at the university level.
• The Gunnin Library’s gate count is hitting record highs year upon year: over 71,000 in 2018, for a collection of 41,300 items on-site serving programs with a total student enrollment of 909.

• Clemson University’s 2018 student population: 24,951
  19,669 undergraduates
  5,282 graduate students
• More than two thirds of undergrads are in-state students: 69% in 2014
  68% in 2018
• In 2017, 13% of Clemson freshmen and 12% of the total undergraduate student body were the first in their families to attend college.
• South Carolina has one of the nation’s lowest percentages of high school students attending out-of-state colleges.
• The typical Clemson undergraduate student has limited experience of the world beyond his/her home community before arriving on campus.

• A dedicated 8’ x 12’ x 15” lighted, securable display case with reconfigurable glass shelves, literally at the Gunnin Library’s threshold.
• The most prominent display location in a building dedicated to art & design programs
• In the middle of ‘Broadway’—Lee Hall’s primary critique space and main hallway
• Across ‘Broadway’ from a 250-seat lecture hall used by all Clemson colleges; i.e., the potential audience is the entire Clemson student body

• Educate: Libraries and librarians are resources for whole-person education and development.
  Promote: Continually remind faculty and students of the depth & scope of our collections.
  Engage & provoke curiosity, learning, conversations, even surprise & delight.
  Invite participation in collection development.
  Demonstrate the library’s relevance and responsiveness to issues and events.
  Push boundaries: Explore topics and/or issues beyond the boundaries of curriculum.

• Share the stage: collaborate with library colleagues/faculty/students to develop a topic
  Research: Explore resources on hand for a topic—acquire new materials
  Involve faculty: announce and promote the topic; solicit and incorporate expertise
  Assemble in plain sight: show your process; involve the people who notice
  Advertise! Libraries blog + social media; University + college events calendars
  Everything circulates! ‘Course Reserves’ status, for check-outs and check-ins
  Document! Bibliographies are resources too.
  Acknowledge and respond to feedback.

• Make a record of interactions before the fact: suggestions, critiques, any/all input
  Track checkouts from the display
  Buzz – feedback of whatever variety; suggestions for acquisition
  Quantify or not, depending on your goals